



## Safeguarding Australia's Food System Security

**Australia benefits from a world-class, highly productive food sector.** The success of our food sector is critical to our economy, national security, and resilience.

However, **our agricultural abundance should not give us false confidence.**

The House Standing Committee on Agriculture's 2023 report, [\*Australian Food Story: Feeding the Nation and Beyond\*](#), found that:

*"Despite Australia being one of the most food secure countries in the world, recent developments both at home and abroad have shown that food security presents real and growing challenges to the nation."*

Events such as COVID-19, compounding natural disasters, the war in Ukraine, and livestock disease outbreaks have shown that our food system may not be resilient to the kinds of complex and global threats we expect the future to bring. Many inputs to the agricultural sector – water, seeds, agrochemicals, fuel and machinery – are also vulnerable to these kinds of threats. [ANZ](#) has highlighted that:

*"Australia is also heavily reliant on imports for inputs critical to food production, such as fuel, fertilisers and agrochemicals. In fact, over 90 percent of Australia's fertiliser supply is imported, with nitrogen-based products sourced mainly from the Middle East and China."*

This makes Australia's food system vulnerable to global trade disruptions, energy price spikes, and geopolitical instability.

**Global Shield Australia is concerned that Australia remains ill-prepared for the next global catastrophe and potential crises.**

**However, this risk also brings opportunities.** If we future-proof our food system, we can reduce our climate impact, make affordable and nutritious food accessible to all Australians and our broader region, protect our livestock and biodiversity, and unlock new economic benefits for the hundreds of thousands of Australians working in food and agriculture.

**Seizing these opportunities requires strong government action.** It is therefore critical that the government's promised *Feeding Australia* national food security strategy delivers real policy reform for Australia's food system.

**To that end, Global Shield Australia has prepared five recommendations, outlined on the following page, that would help ensure Australia's food system security is safeguarded into the future.**



## **Feeding Australia: Five Recommendations to Safeguard Australia's Food System Security**

To ensure that the Feeding Australia strategy effectively safeguards Australia's food system security it must:

- 1. Be delivered as a priority and deal with the entirety of Australia's food system and all policy areas.** In particular, *Feeding Australia* should consider the national security implications of food system security, identify and address Australia's vulnerabilities, and enable all areas of government policy to be examined through a food security lens.
- 2. Be informed by a whole-of-government and comprehensive food system risk assessment.** similar to that undertaken in jurisdictions such as the [United States](#). It is only by understanding the threats to Australia's food system, and our capabilities to respond, that a fully-informed *Feeding Australia* strategy can be developed. This risk assessment should consider all potential threats and hazards that could harm the food and agricultural sector, including high-consequence and catastrophic scenarios.
- 3. Prioritise support for resilient food production inputs and practices.** Our food system will be made significantly more secure if our food and agriculture sector has access to a wider and upgraded set of food commodities, methods, and technologies. Alternative and more resilient food production inputs and practices are key to preparing for severely disruptive threats to Australia's highest-yielding crops, such as from sudden climatic changes, disease outbreaks, or major geopolitical events.
- 4. Consider the costs and benefits of stockpiling essential food items, seeds, and other agricultural inputs.** This includes assessing potential locations, facility requirements, and how rapid distribution can be achieved in a crisis. It should also look at the risk arising from concentrated or foreign-controlled supply chains and dependencies on single-source imports for critical inputs, as well as international collaboration or partnerships that could help to share burdens and support our regional partners (for example, by establishing a regional seed vault).
- 5. Be overseen by a dedicated Special Envoy for Food Security or relevant Assistant Minister.** The cross-cutting nature of food policy means that dedicated political-level oversight is needed to ensure it is delivered and implemented effectively.

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